



GSWU/UAW Graduate Student Workers United/International Union,
United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of
America 2929 University Ave. SE, Suite 312, Minneapolis, MN 55414

January 13, 2012

via hand delivery

Shelley Carthen Watson
Office of the General Counsel
360 McNamara Alumni Center
200 Oak Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Shelley Carthen Watson,

We are part of the majority of Graduate Student Employees across campus who want a Union, from Electrical Engineering to Education, Genetics to Geography, China to Chile, and we are writing to respond to your letters dated October 17th and December 7th, 2011. In these letters you make a number of baseless claims that "GSWU/UAW organizers" have "disrupted" graduate assistants' "work and home lives," "harassed" graduate assistants and "ignored specific requests to leave." These claims are false. These claims are clearly part of your ongoing anti-union campaign.

Contrary to your characterization, "GSWU/UAW organizers" are not outsiders without the right to speak to graduate student workers. The "GSWU/UAW organizers" referred to in your letter are, in fact, graduate students who are speaking to fellow graduate students about forming our Union-- exercising our right to free speech in doing so. As not only a matter of rights, but as a part of the time-honored tradition of debate and open discussion in public Universities, we encourage you not to interfere in our discussion of unionization in our workplace.

Open dialogue is not harassment: it is integral to the democratic process of forming our Union and to the democratic process of a Union itself. These letters give the appearance that the University is attempting to undermine that democratic process in order to retain the unilateral power the administration will lose when our Union is certified.

The University's demand that we cease speaking to our fellow graduate student workers not only in the workplace, but also in our homes is a further attempt to restrict our free speech rights. Speaking with people at home is a common and time-tested method of communication that Republicans, Democrats, and innumerable other political parties and causes have used—making it part of the lifeblood of democratic political discourse in this country and across the world.

Based upon the University's actions during past Unionization campaigns here at the U of M, the accusations in your letter, and the heavily biased and misleading FAQ posted on the University website, it is clear that the administration intends to capitalize on any opportunity to misinform and intimidate graduate student workers to try to prevent us from forming our Union. By attempting to curtail our rights to talk to one another about Unionization in both our workplaces and our homes, the administration has revealed its true position: that you would rather we didn't talk about Unionization anywhere, anytime, at all. We are nevertheless forming our Union. Therefore, we request that the University administration cease this behavior and initiate a more cooperative relationship with our Union.

Sincerely,

Nikhil Admal, Aerospace Engineering